

REFUGE

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This is a storytelling game for 2 to 4 people. Players become refugees as they struggle to create new lives for themselves in an unfamiliar land.

1. Preparing to play

Gather paper, pens or pencils and a few ordinary six-sided dice. Then explain the following:

- Together we play an incomplete family from a place we'll call Oldhome, who become refugees and settle in a place we'll call Newlandia.
- Our family has been given a place to live. Younger refugees are in school, adults are in language classes. We have some support, but we will have to figure most things out for ourselves.
- Oldhome is a lot like right here, where we are playing in the real world. Bad things happened there, but we'll leave them vague and undefined as we play.
- Newlandia has a different language, different food, and different ways of doing even simple everyday things. Oldhome language and culture are little known.

Communication

Explain the two special rules for communication:

- Whenever your refugee talks with someone from Newlandia, **just describe**. The active player and the guide give simple descriptions of what is being said without using the exact words, like a narrator giving a summary: "I tell John I've been looking for him." / "He asks why."
- Whenever your refugee talks with a fellow refugee from Oldhome, **say everything**. This means the active player and the guide both say the exact words their refugees are using, like actors performing on stage: "Hey John! I was looking for you." / "Oh really? What's up?"

Peace

How difficult was your journey, and how heavily does it weigh on you?

- The player born furthest from here chooses another player and a category to divide their refugees:
 - Faith, Generation, Gender, Sexual orientation, Route taken from Oldhome to Newlandia
- Next they roll a die and record the result for their refugee. The other refugee takes whichever number would bring the total to 7 (e.g. if the first player rolled a 5, the second would take a 2).
- Finally, the other player decides how the category applies for their refugee: how old are they? What is their gender? The first player then decides for their refugee, making sure to be different.

Repeat this process for the next player on the left. Keep going until every refugee has two results. Add them, then find the total on this table and record your PEACE.

11-12 You were lucky. Your journey was difficult but safe. Your PEACE is +3

9-10 Your journey was hard and exhausting, but you didn't encounter the cruelty and inhumanity that others did. Your PEACE is +2.

6-8 You went through nasty and harrowing times on your way here. These experiences stay

with you. Your PEACE is +1.

- 2-5 Becoming a refugee was a horrific experience, and you are haunted by some of the worst moments. Your PEACE is +0.

Fluency

How fluent are you in Newlandian ways?

- The oldest player rolls a die on behalf of the whole family. Everyone takes the result.
 - A high number indicates the refugees find Newlandia somewhat similar to Oldhome.
 - A low number indicates many differences. Newlandian life is a constant challenge.
- Each refugee rolls a second die for their personal capability.
 - A high number means you are ready for Newlandia. Maybe you're open-minded, or highly educated, or you have a helpful philosophy of life.
 - A low number means that you will not have an easy time. Perhaps you are stuck in your ways, or very traditional, or you find Newlandia confrontational or upsetting.
- Add the numbers and find the result on this table:
 - 11-12 You have everything going for you. Newlandia isn't so different, and you are confident of your future. Your FLUENCY is +3
 - 9-10 You have some work to do before you feel comfortable in Newlandia, but you think you'll be okay. Your FLUENCY is +2
 - 6-8 You feel like it will be a long journey before you feel comfortable in Newlandia, if you ever will. Your FLUENCY is +1
 - 2-5 Fitting into Newlandia is challenging, and every day is a battle. Your FLUENCY is 0

Heart

How strong is your connection to other Oldhome refugees?

- Each refugee determines their refugee's symbolic connection to Oldhome.
 - Subtract your Fluency and Heart from 6, giving a result from 6 to 0.
 - Higher numbers mean fellow refugees see you as representative of their struggles.
- Each refugee now rolls a second die for their personal charisma.
 - Higher numbers mean you are easy to like and people listen to you.
 - Lower numbers mean you are socially awkward or reserved.
- Add the Numbers together and find the total below:
 - 11-12 You are a much-loved member of the Oldhome community, and people expect much from you. Your HEART is +3
 - 9-10 You are an important part of the community. Your HEART is +2
 - 6-8 You are part of the community, but not central to it. Your HEART is +1
 - 2-5 You feel distant from the community. Your HEART is 0

Stress, Alienation and Disconnection

Each refugee has three other numerical scores:

- Stress: Roll a dice and add three. This is your starting Stress.
- Disconnection: this indicates how close you feel to your culture. Your starting Disconnection is 0.
- Alienation: this reflects how welcome you feel in Newlandia. Your starting Alienation is 0.

2. Creating the family

Who are you?

Talk together about how your refugees make a family and share ideas about what kind of people you are.

- Your family is probably incomplete. This is common among refugee families.
- Name your refugee after someone from your earliest school days.

Ambitions

Invent an ambition for your refugee. Your ambition can be grandiose or humble, but you must interact with Newlandian society to achieve it.

Example ambitions:

- Work as a doctor here, like I did back home.
- Get a Newlandian boyfriend.
- Establish a garden that can feed our family.

Goals

Think of some possible goals for your refugee to pursue this week. A goal is a step on the path to your ambition. It might be a small and humble step, but it is important to you.

Example goals:

- Complete an application for my medical degree to be recognised here.
- Get invited to a popular boy's party.
- Clear junk out of the garden area.

Tasks

Decide some tasks that face your refugees this week. Decide one for each refugee, and one additional task that you can assign during the warm-up scene.

Example tasks:

- Tell the neighbours to be more considerate with their music at night.
- Get the oven fixed.
- Get a banking fee reversed.

Warm-up scene

The game begins with a simple scene of the refugees sharing a meal. Starting with the eldest refugee, everyone describes one thing about the scene.

- Where you are having your meal? (At home? Outside? At a cheap restaurant?)
- What do you see around you? (Unfamiliar things? Wealth? Poverty?)
- What are you eating? (Oldhome food? Newlandian food?)

Following the communication rules, the eldest refugee will begin the conversation by asking other family members about their plans for the week ahead.

- Continue the conversation, talking as a family about your goals and tasks.
- Listen to everyone else. Show how your refugee feels about the plans and choice of others.

Once everyone has chosen a goal, and the “extra” task has been assigned, end the scene, and begin play.

3. Playing days

We follow the refugees through five days in their Newlandian lives.

Refresh actions

Each day, every refugee has an allowance of *two actions* which they fit around the chores, classes and responsibilities that take up much of their time.

Assign guides

Every day you will also be a *guide* for one other refugee. If you have three or four players, rotate guide assignments daily, and extra players are *helpers* when needed.

Tasks & Troubles

Every Guide rolls one die for *Tasks & Troubles* to introduce while guiding that day. (Sometimes you will be instructed to roll more than one, which could mean multiple tasks or troubles that day.)

- 1-2: The refugee encounters trouble.
- 3-4: Nothing unusual.
- 5-6: The refugee must accept a new task.

The guide decides on a task or trouble when introducing it into a scene. (They can discuss ideas with helpers, or even with the refugee player, if they wish.)

Start taking turns

The player who was born furthest away takes the first turn. Play then passes around the table. (As an option, you could follow the day’s events in order, jumping around between refugees as needed.)

After every refugee has used both actions, and all tasks and troubles are introduced, end the day.

Ending the day

At the end of the day, the family get to talk to each other. A refugee can do any of the following:

- Transfer a task to another willing refugee.
- Transfer one (and only one) point of stress to another willing refugee.

Sleeping through the night

When your refugee try to sleep, roll two dice and add your Peace score. Then add your Stress score to your

number of unfinished Tasks and compare:

- *Resting roll plus Peace is higher:* You sleep through the night.
- *Equal:* Your sleep is uneasy. Increase your Stress by one. Your Fluency and Heart scores have a maximum of +1 for tomorrow.
- *Stress plus tasks is higher:* You can hardly sleep. Increase your Stress by two. Your Fluency and Heart scores have a maximum of +0 for tomorrow.

4. Playing turns

Choosing actions

The player chooses one action for their turn:

- *Venture:* the refugee leaves their comfort zone and tries to get something done in Newlandian society, pursuing their goal or trying to complete a task.
- *Observe:* the refugee quietly moves around the edges of Newlandian society, learning how to get things done.
- *Community:* the refugee spends time with the Oldhome community, to reduce stress, help others, or seek help of their own.
- *Escape:* the refugee hides away from all kinds of interactions.

Questions and answers

When they choose an action, the refugee player will give the guide some information about where they are and what they are doing. The guide then asks questions to fill out the scene.

- The refugee player does most of the work as they answer the guide's questions. They will imagine the scene and describe what happens. They can always pass on a question if they aren't sure.
- The guide is welcome to ask challenging or loaded questions that spin the scene in unexpected directions: "Why do you start crying?" Or "Why do you slip over, and who sees you fall?"
- Two or three questions will often be enough to get a good picture of a scene.

Work together to establish what happens. Helpers can step in with suggestions or advice.

Example questions:

- What does the office look like?
- What is bothering you this morning?
- Who do you meet at the supermarket?

Playing scenes

Many turns will not be complete with just questions and answers. Often you will need to play through the moment-to-moment detail of a scene. Venture actions will almost always require at least a short scene.

- The guide takes over the work of imagining and describing the situation. The refugee player describes only what their refugee says and does.
- Follow the communication rules, and invoke any special interaction rules as given under the different action types. The guide speaks for all characters the refugee meets. (Helpers can be assigned to help here too.)
- The scene continues until either player, or a helper, calls it to an end. In particular, after an interaction roll is made, start looking to end the scene.

Interpreting interaction rolls

After an interaction roll, keep playing the scene to show what happens to the refugee. The refugee player makes the final decision about what happens in the scene and what a roll outcome means.

Sometimes a fantastic roll will allow a refugee to operate smoothly in the foreign culture of Newlandia, but they will still fail to get what they actually want.

Interruptions

If the guide needs to interrupt the day with a new task or trouble, they can do this at any time. New tasks or troubles can be added during or after a turn, or at any other time as appropriate.

New Tasks

Unlike the normal run of play where the refugee player does most of the creative work, the Guide will come up with a problem and introduce it to the refugee. The refugee player can define the exact task needed to deal with the problem.

Troubles

Refugees are outsiders, and Newlandia offers plenty of unpleasantness for those who look different or those who haven't learned when to be wary. Incidents of rudeness, exploitation and abuse will occur.

As with new tasks, the Guide will decide on a trouble and introduce it, asking questions of the refugee to establish how they respond. There is no need to go into detail on the troubling experience.

At the end of the interaction, increase the refugee's Stress by one. The refugee also selects one further cost:

- Increase Alienation by one.
- Increase Stress by two instead of one.
- Take on a new task to respond to the trouble.

5. Handling Actions

Venture

Your refugee pursues a goal, or attempts to deal with a task. They must deal with Newlandian ways.

- Tell the Guide what you set out to do, then answer their questions.
- When you try to achieve something in Newlandian culture, make an interaction roll.
- If an interaction roll never seems appropriate, you can swap to an Observe action.

Culture clash?

The Guide must decide if the refugee faces a culture clash during this action.

- Evaluate what is going on and what has been established already.
- Sometimes it will be obvious one way or the other.
- If the Guide doesn't want to make a decision, they can roll a die.
 - When pursuing a goal, culture clash is common (1-3 on the die).
 - When dealing with a task, culture clash is less common (1 on the die).
- If the Guide decides on a culture clash, they will ask you what form it takes.

If you face a culture clash, and you are under pressure to behave in a culturally challenging way, you must decide if you stay with Oldhome cultural expectations or break them to fit in.

- If you hold to Oldhome ways, make the interaction roll as if your Fluency is -1
- If you act Newlandian, increase your Disconnection by one and make the roll as normal.

Newlandian interaction roll

Whenever you try to achieve something while communicating with a Newlandian, roll two dice and add your Fluency score.

10+ You communicate or do what you want. Tell the guide how it works out.

If this action was towards your goal, reduce your Alienation by one if you wish.

7-9 Things aren't going smoothly, but you can push harder. Choose one:

- Walk away. Increase your Stress by one. You can try again another day with a +1 bonus.
- Keep trying. Increase your Stress by two, and get part of what you want. Another part-success (or better) is needed to finish the job. Tell the Guide what you still need to do.

6- Things go poorly. You do not get what you want, although you might not realise this at first. Choose one of the following:

- You have missed something important. Increase your Stress by two. Tell the Guide what you think you have achieved. The Guide tells you what you have missed, and adds a Task to your list as a consequence of your mistake.
- You communicate or do entirely the wrong thing, causing offence or upset. Tell the Guide what you do. The Guide will tell you how people react. Increase your Stress by three and your Alienation by one, and tell the Guide how the interaction works out.

Observe

Your refugee works on their ability to understand Newlandian ways.

Tell the guide what you do to learn about Newlandia. Declare a planned interaction with Newlandian culture, and gain +1 on the interaction roll when it arrives.

If you wish, reduce your Alienation by one but increase your Disconnection by one.

Community

Your refugee spends some time with the Oldhome community, helping out at a community centre or visiting relatives or gathering to play some music from home.

Tell the guide what you do with the community, and answer their questions. At an appropriate point, make a community roll. After resolving it your turn ends.

Community interaction roll

When you engage with your fellow refugees, roll two dice and add your Heart.

10+ You get what you need from the community. Tell the guide how, and choose two:

- Lower your Stress by one point.
- Choose another refugee and lower their Stress by one point when you talk at the end of the day.
- Choose a task or a step toward your goal. Someone in your community can help you with it. Take +1 for all future rolls to complete it.

Also, if you wish, lower your Disconnection by one.

7-9 You are active in the community. Tell the Guide how and choose one of the 10+ options.

Your Guide will roll a die immediately. On a 1 or 2:

- You are pressured to reject Newlandian culture. Tell the Guide what you are asked to say or do, and how you respond. At the end of the interaction, increase either your Alienation or your Disconnection by one.

On a 5 or 6:

- You are pressured to take on new responsibilities in the community. Tell the Guide what you are asked to do, and how you respond. If you accept, add another Task to your list for the week. If you refuse, increase your Disconnection by one.

6- Things go poorly with your community. Tell the Guide how things go wrong.

Increase your Stress and your Disconnection by one each.

Escape

Your refugee takes a break, away from difficult interactions.

Tell the Guide what you do to escape, and choose one:

- *Reduce your Stress by one, but make an extra Task or Trouble roll tomorrow.*
- *Reduce your Stress by two, but make an extra Task or Trouble roll tomorrow, and also increase your Disconnection or Alienation by one.*

6. Life in Newlandia

What is Newlandia? Any game of *Refuge* will only show a thin slice of Newlandia, and will leave many questions unanswered. However, it's crucial to bring that slice of Newlandia to vivid life. This section discusses the challenges you'll face dealing with Newlandian culture.

Culture conflict

Cultural conflicts are not provided in advance, and players must generate them on the fly based on what is happening in the game. Here are some ideas and suggestions to get you started.

Make it big

Don't make your cultural conflicts small or quiet. Go for big, obvious problems. If the refugee wants nothing more than to run away and hide forever, you're doing it right.

You don't need to make sense

As a guide, it is not your job to ensure Newlandian culture makes sense. Your job is to put the refugee in an uncomfortable situation, so don't worry about anything else.

Abuse social scripts

We all live our lives following social scripts. When you're heading for a culture clash, start playing out one of these innocuous scripts. Just choose a very ordinary moment and go through the detail of it, step by step. Then give the refugee one of these experiences:

- A Newlandian does something really unexpected and shocking. A shopkeeper seems to be ignoring you when you're alone in the shop together; an old lady shoves you out of her way and you fall down; a friendly woman in the elevator starts looking through your purse.
- A Newlandian reacts as though you have done something unexpected and shocking, and you have no

idea what. They gasp and point or even slap you!

- A Newlandian follows happily along with the social script, but instead of giving you your shopping or letting you come inside, they stare at you expectantly. Apparently there is something else you need to do here, but what?

Violate Boundaries

To really highlight cultural differences, violate the boundaries of the refugee. Every culture has slightly different rules around certain sensitive issues, so pick one and do something that would be unacceptable in your (Oldhome's) culture. Here are some areas in which cultures can set very different boundary lines:

- *Hygiene*: Can you blow your nose or fart in public? Do people share food as they eat it? Is handwashing essential? Do people say they need to use the toilet or only use a euphemism? Do people talk to each other in a toilet area?
- *Sex and gender relations*: Do men and women talk to each other freely? Are chaperones expected? Are different standards of behaviour expected of women and men? Do people acknowledge sexuality in casual conversation? Would a boss tell their employees about her sex life?
- *Social distance*: Do people use formal manners with strangers? Do people touch each other? What parts of the body is it okay to touch? Is eye contact disrespectful or respectful? Do people stand close together?
- *Hierarchy*: Do people defer to higher-status others in obvious ways? Do higher-status people treat lower-status people in a friendly way or a distant way? How is status signalled, is it obvious or subtle, and what happens if you miss a cue?
- *Directness*: Do people ask others to do things, or just give them clues and expect them to work it out? Do people speak directly about problems and tell people they are wrong, or do people signal challenging messages indirectly and maintain a polite interaction?

7. Ending the week

After five days of play, it is time to finish. Follow these steps to close the game.

Behaviour

Going around the table, the group considers each refugee in turn. Are they keeping their own culture? Are they adopting Newlandian ways? Are they doing both of these, or just one, or neither?

On your turn, remain silent while the other players discuss their impressions of your refugee's behaviour. They might interpret situations differently, and see things in your refugee's behaviour that you didn't notice. Don't explain anything or defend your refugee, just listen.

Scores

Each player now considers the Alienation and Disconnection scores for their own refugee.

These scores give some ideas about how the refugee is experiencing life in Newlandia.

- Both scores 0-1: the refugee is tending towards *integration*.
- Alienation 2+ but disconnection 0-1: the refugee is tending towards *marginalization*.
- Alienation 0-1 but disconnection 2+: the refugee is tending towards *assimilation*.
- Both scores 2+: the refugee is tending towards *rejection*.

Outcomes

After considering the evidence discussed above, each player secretly makes a decision about their refugee

and chooses an outcome for them. You can choose any outcome for your refugee, for any reason.

Integration

A refugee who integrates finds a way to maintain their Oldhome cultural identity at the same time as embracing a new Newlandian identity. This is a very positive result, as the refugee is able to keep hold of their background while also making the most of present circumstances. Refugees who manage to integrate tend to do well in their new societies. However, it can be very hard to get to this point, and finding ways to balance two cultural identities is fraught with difficulty.

Rejection

A refugee who takes a pathway of cultural rejection is in trouble. Avoiding the obligations of their old culture while evading the pressures of the new one can deliver short-term comfort but it closes off the refugee's options quickly, and can lead to major difficulties for the refugee down the road.

Assimilation

A refugee who moves towards assimilation will find life in Newlandia opens up in many ways, but at the cost of their cultural identity and their connection to their old community and country. Older refugees often fear that their children will go too far down this path and forget where they came from. Refugees who take this path often do well in Newlandia but they still have problems in reconciling their identity.

Marginalization

A refugee who accepts a life of marginalization will face difficulties constantly in Newlandian society. If the refugee community is large enough, they will often be able to live happily enough in that cultural enclave, but it will be hard to move beyond it and to take advantage of new opportunities. Younger refugees often fear that their elders will be stuck on this path and will be trapped in unhappy circumstances. Refugees on this path are often very settled in their identity but face constant material difficulties.

Ambition

Evaluate how your refugee stands in regards to their ambition. Did they achieve their goal for the week? Did they fail to do so? Are they still working towards that goal, or have they changed to something else?

Sometimes it won't be clear whether a goal has been achieved or not. When that happens, it's up to the you to decide how the refugee is doing. You can always poll other players for advice!

Closing Scenes

Go around the table one last time, taking turns as the active player. On your turn, describe a closing scene involving your refugee. In the scene you describe, give a glimpse or a hint of at least one of the following, or both if you prefer:

- How the refugee is progressing towards their ambition.
- How the refugee is coping with life in Newlandia, i.e. the outcome you chose for them.

Do not show too much. In particular, don't show whether or not they achieve their ambition, or whether they ultimately thrive as refugees, or collapse under the pressure. Leave this open to your imagination.

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